



# Media Fairness Initiative

## A Look at Bias in the News



### Coverage of McCain Focuses on Negatives

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During his presidential campaign – and throughout his life – Sen. John McCain has overcome incredible obstacles and now has emerged as the frontrunner for the GOP nomination.

Despite this remarkable comeback story, the mainstream media have focused a large amount of their coverage on McCain's disagreements with some members of his party.

For example, the February 18 cover of *Newsweek* features a photo of a distraught-looking McCain looking up at photos of conservative personalities. **The headline reads, "There Will Be Blood."**

**There is a striking contrast between Newsweek's cover story on McCain and two recent Newsweek cover stories on Sen. Hillary Clinton and Sen. Barack Obama. The January 21 Newsweek cover featured Sen. Clinton with the headline, "I Found My Own Voice." And the January 14 cover featured Sen. Obama with the headline, "Our Time for Change Has Come."**

**In addition, the Newsweek cover story on January 28 featured a photo of President Bush with the caption, "The Party's Over."**

Also, in its analysis of news coverage for the week of Feb. 4-10, the nonpartisan Project for Excellence in Journalism stated: "By winning the big Super Tuesday states on Feb. 5, McCain cemented his status in the media's collective judgment as presumptive nominee. That should have been cause for celebration in his camp. **But as the week drew to a close, much of the media narrative concerned his continuing problems with what at times was described as a hostile conservative wing of the GOP.**"

### CBS Uses "Conservative" Label, Never "Liberal"

During its two-hour primetime coverage of the Super Tuesday election results, **CBS News used the term "conservative" close to 50 times, but did not use the term "liberal" even once**, according to a Media Research Center analysis.

For example, anchor Katie Couric announced that Sen. John McCain "won the deeply conservative state of Oklahoma." But not even Massachusetts or New York was referred to as "liberal." CBS contributor Jeff Greenfield described California as "a conservative state for Republicans."

In addition, while announcing Obama's win in Connecticut a little past 10 p.m., Couric simply said the state "has a strong anti-war sentiment" rather than refer to it as a liberal state.

In addition, Greenfield referred to Sen. Tom Coburn as "the most conservative senator" and Bob Schieffer referred to Sen. Coburn as "very conservative."

The Media Research Center hosts a monthly meeting to discuss examples of bias such as this. For more information, visit <http://www.mrc.org/biasmeeting.asp>.

